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ABSTRACT

This monograph is intended to provide readers with a more informed understanding of the current state of coordination in vocational education planning. The report consists of three chapters and two appendixes. Following the introduction (chapter 1), the second chapter describes general processes and procedures that are useful for facilitating improvements in coordinative relationships in support of vocational education planning and ways for facilitating improved coordinative relationships with respect to specific problems and barriers to coordination. These barriers are presented in terms of a theoretical perspective and its operational implications. This chapter also contains examples that depict how coordination in vocational education planning is impeded by the identified barriers. Chapter 3 contains descriptions of the concept of coordination, basic necessities for interorganizational relations, and characteristics underlying coordinated behavior that can enhance or impede coordination. Chapter 3 also includes a table that cross-references facilitators to coordination, which are found in chapter 2, with facilitators to coordination derived from the literature review. Appended material includes a list of field-site coordinators and consultants who participated in the study and a list of the persons by role who participated in the dialogue sessions. (LRA)

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Research and Development Series No. 187

COORDINATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PLANNING

– BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS –

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FOREWORD

The findings reported in this study are designed to provide a better understanding of coordination in vocational education planning to vocational educators and other persons who are concerned or involved with the process of providing comprehensive and responsive vocational education. The findings are based on an analysis of the perceptions and attitudes of nearly four hundred individuals who represent a broad range of agencies, groups, and institutions at state and local levels, both within and outside the educational system.

The study was conceptualized and implemented by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education under a contract with the Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education, the U.S. Office of Education. The National Center extends its thanks and appreciation to the nearly four hundred citizens who volunteered their time and expertise to detail their experiences with coordination in vocational education planning and to suggest ways of improving this process. Invaluable assistance and advice in achieving study objectives was provided by field site staff persons in Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Significant contributions to the study were also made by Jessica Jahnke, Le-Dak Tang, and Lynn Brant. These National Center Graduate Research Associates participated in the dialogue process and assisted with the data analysis. Recognition is also due to those consultants who reacted and contributed to the content of this report.

Robert E. Taylor
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in Vocational Education

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is intended to provide readers with a more informed understanding of the current state of coordination in vocational education planning. The process of coordination in vocational education planning is an emerging one, nationally. The results which are presented about coordination in vocational education planning were obtained from ideas, perceptions, and suggestions provided to us by nearly 400 persons in eight states who are involved in coordinative relationships for vocational education planning, from numerous documents supplied by state agencies in these states, and from a review of pertinent literature. The reader is also provided with ways to facilitate improvements in coordination in vocational education planning that were suggested to the study team. Given the fact that the process of coordination in vocational education planning is still not well developed or structured, this report is not to be considered as a manual for doing coordinated vocational education planning.

The term planning is defined in its broadest sense in the following way: planning includes those activities that contribute to decision-making with respect to the future or direction of vocational education. The term coordination, as used in this study, refers to the interaction of two or more groups, agencies, or institutions for the purpose of planning for vocational education. Therefore, coordination in vocational education planning involves the interaction of two or more entities for the purpose of conducting activities that contribute to decision-making with respect to the future or direction of vocational education.

The results that are reported in this study are presented with the realization that they are affected by at least two limitations. The first limitation is that the documents and the outcomes of the dialogue sessions were taken at face value. The second limitation is that the process of analyzing and synthesizing the enormous volume of documentation and commentary that was available required decisions that were based on subjective judgments; consequently, the results that are reported are subject to unintended biases of the study team.

The results of this study will be further verified and extended during the coming year as part of a scope of work for Year III of the National Center contract with the U.S. Office of Education.

Organization of the Report

This report consists of three chapters and two appendices. Chapter I, *Introduction,* is the present one. Chapter II, *Results,* describes general processes and procedures which are useful for facilitating improvements in coordinative relationships in support of vocational education planning and ways for facilitating improved coordinative relationships with respect to specific problems and barriers to coordination. Major barriers to coordination in vocational education planning are also described. These barriers are presented in terms of a theoretical perspective and its operational implications. This chapter also contains examples which depict how coordination in vocational education planning is impeded by the identified barriers.

Chapter III, *The Context for Coordination in Vocational Education Planning,* includes descriptions of the concept of coordination, basic necessities for interorganizational relations, and characteristics underlying coordinated behavior that can enhance or impede coordination. This chapter is provided to enable readers to gain a more in-depth understanding of the nature of interorganizational coordinative relationships. This understanding might be especially helpful to persons who are responsible for improving coordination in vocational education planning. Chapter III also includes a table that cross-references facilitators to coordination which are found in Chapter II with facilitators to coordination derived from the literature review.

Appendix A lists the fieldsite coordinators and consultants who participated in the study. Appendix B lists the number of persons by role who participated in the dialogue sessions.

The procedures which were used to develop the results found in Chapter II are available from the National Center.

CHAPTER II

RESULTS

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section I, *Facilitators to Coordinated Planning,* describes a number of ways that have been suggested to improve coordination in vocational education planning. The facilitators that are described are related, wherever possible, to problems or barriers currently being experienced in coordination in vocational education planning. Section II, *Barriers to Coordination in Vocational Education Planning,* describes these current barriers to effective coordination in vocational education planning in more detail. Examples are presented of how these barriers are perceived as affecting coordination.

The term *planning* in the context of this study is defined in its broadest sense in the following way: planning includes those activities that contribute to decision-making with respect to vocational education. As used in this chapter, planning includes all activities contributing to decisions in six vocational education functional areas. The six functional areas are: (a) resource allocation; (b) resource acquisition; (c) instructional program mix; (d) program improvement and maintenance; (e) instructional support; and (f) system maintenance and support.

Any or all activities that enable decision-making with respect to any of the six functions can justifiably be considered planning activities. Although agencies might differ substantially in the variety and scope of their planning activities, they will be engaged in many forms of planning according to this perspective.

The term *coordination* as used in this chapter refers to the interaction of two or more groups, agencies, or institutions for the purpose of, or for supporting, planning for vocational education.

Therefore, coordination in vocational education planning involves the interaction of two or more entities for the purpose of conducting activities that contribute to decision-making with respect to vocational education.

Section I

Facilitators to Coordinated Planning

Throughout the dialogue sessions, attempts were made to obtain participants' thoughts on techniques or practices which they regarded as helpful to coordinated planning. This process resulted in several hundred suggested facilitators, many of which were ideas rather than actual current practices of the agencies.

In our analysis, we have reduced the facilitators to a manageable number by grouping similar suggestions together and by discarding those which were clearly unrelated to the central focus of a coordinated planning process. This section presents two different ways of looking at facilitators. First, examples of facilitators are grouped according to a number of general categories or types of procedures; second, facilitators are described in relationship to the common problems and barriers which impede coordinated planning. Section II of this chapter presents a more complete description of these barriers.

General Categories of Facilitators

Planned Meetings Among Various Groups

Meetings were perceived as facilitative because of the communication and awareness that can be obtained by face-to-face contact. The meetings are considered more facilitative if they feature two-way communication rather than just lectures. Two examples of meetings that many participants at different levels regarded as helpful were:

- annual statewide conferences for vocational educators, particularly where seminars and opportunities for give-and-take are available
- regionally-based meetings of vocational educators for information exchange

Joint Development of Plans and Procedures

Respondents perceived that organizations are likely to have a higher degree of commitment to plans and procedures to which they have actively contributed. Examples of joint planning that were mentioned as facilitators included:

- a procedure for involving district staff with state staff in determining statewide goals and objectives for vocational education
- a process whereby the state division and approximately two thousand local vocational educators participated in joint development of program evaluation criteria, procedures, and instruments
- ad hoc task forces involving state and local staff which were organized to attack specific planning problems
- the role of the State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (SOICC) in interagency approaches to data use

New or Modified Organizational Structures or Procedures Created to Enhance Coordination

A number of organizational structures or procedures have been suggested, or implemented to improve coordination in vocational education planning. These structures or procedures are specifically designed to improve organizational accessibility, which is one of the necessary conditions for coordination:

- local advisory council for vocational education with membership from secondary and postsecondary institutions
- board of cooperative services formed by several districts to provide for shared use of administrative and instructional support staff
- system of regional service to districts by state program supervision and planning staff
- designation of state staff person as coordinator of various plans for education required by the federal government
- state vocational division liaison person to other education divisions

Provisions for Technical Assistance and Training Related to Planning

Due to the variety and complexity of delivery system structure, procedures, and information in vocational education, some participants at every level indicated the need for technical assistance and training among organizations involved in the planning process. Common examples included:

- state-sponsored training sessions in planning procedure/policy for new vocational administrators
- procedure for orientation and training of state and local advisory council members
- technical assistance provided by state planning and program staff to local districts for planning and funding decisions
- data users' conferences sponsored by SOICC

Increased Communication Among and Within Agencies

Respondents frequently commented on the need for better communication. They emphasized practices and policies which improved feedback on organizational performances, increased interagency contribution to policy and procedures developed, or fostered a flow of relevant information to policy-making groups such as local school boards and state legislatures. Examples of such practices are:

- legislative mandate that state education agencies must set aside a period of time for acquiring field input in their plans
- increased input to federal legislation from local administration of vocational education
- local representation on the State Advisory Council for Vocational Education and the state governing board for vocational education
- increased sharing of information among branches or units of the state division concerning communication with school districts

Procedures for Resolution of Interagency Conflicts

Some respondents were using, or suggested, tactics for reduction or resolution of interagency conflicts. Such procedures were considered helpful in situations where frequent interagency disagreements had taken place. Two examples of resolution techniques are:

- interagency cooperative agreements
- appeal process by which local districts can present a case for initiating new instructional programs based on data assembled by the district

Methods for Promoting Coordinated Planning by Offering Incentives or Reducing Risks of Coordination

Participants mentioned some procedures which could increase the probability of successful interagency planning by making coordination more beneficial or less risky to agencies involved. Implementation of these practices required (or would require) changes in legislation. Examples included:

- state division offering financial incentives to local districts/postsecondary institutions to encourage interagency coordination
- simplification or reduction of federal data collection and transmission requirements for vocational education
- greater stability or continuity in federal legislation and goals for vocational education

Facilitators in Relationship to Problems and Barriers of Coordinated Planning

Another way to present the facilitators is to relate them to the significant problems and barriers which impede coordinated planning in vocational education. The following sections describe facilitators suggested to alleviate four key problems. Section II of this chapter elaborates on these problems and their specific effects.

Facilitators Related to Lack of Direction for Coordinated Planning

A key problem affecting vocational education is that there is a lack of direction or leadership for coordinated statewide planning, and a lack of consensus on roles and responsibilities which various agencies should have in a coordinated planning process. A symptom of this problem is that there seems to be a lack of consensus among agencies as to the mission and goals of vocational education.

At present, one state is initiating a process for development of statewide goals for vocational education. State division staff confer and arrive at what they consider to be the overall goals for vocational education in the state. Local district staff also conceptualize what they feel to be the overall system goals, which state staff integrate with their goals list to assemble a master list. Then, representatives of local districts meet at work sessions with the state staff where specific objectives for the system as a whole are developed under the framework of the overall system goals.

When the districts prepare their local applications or plans for vocational education, they will write according to objectives that they helped formulate. As this process has only recently been introduced, it is difficult to evaluate its statewide impact. However, it has promise as a facilitator because it involved several levels of the delivery system (State Advisory Council for Vocational Education and other state educational representatives are also invited) and because the agencies participating realize that they have a voice in determining statewide directions for vocational education.

Facilitators Related to Legislation

Another key problem perceived by participants is that the current federal vocational education legislation is too restrictive in its specificity and has inherent contradictions or inconsistencies. It is felt that these conditions tend to: (a) create uncertainties in what is required or expected from vocational education agencies; and (b) cause vocational education agencies to divert resources from coordinated proactive planning toward compliance planning.

Participants recommended that greater stability of legislative thrusts would tend to reduce uncertainties or inconsistencies in the federal policy for vocational education. Too many changes in the direction of legislation and roles and regulations over a short period of time tend to create perceived inconsistencies and uncertainty in the perception of state and local vocational educators. Participants felt that continuity in the definitions and objectives related to equity and access to vocational education is necessary to the maintenance and implementation of those goals. Legislative continuity facilitates coordinated planning by giving agencies at various levels a clear conception of what their aims should be, and by providing a basis for common direction.

Another related recommendation is that there be more local input into federal priorities for vocational education to promote local/state/federal coordination in policy development and implementation. The federal legislation authorizes interagency coordination and participatory planning, especially in the state plan development process. But at the federal level, there should be a mechanism for obtaining a broad range of participation in determining legislative priorities.

Dialogue participants expressed a concern for simplification of procedures required by legislation, especially procedures pertaining to data collection and transmission. Participants felt a reduction in the federal data burden would allow them more time and resources to commit toward planning and interaction with other agencies. State agency staff felt that decreasing data burdens would allow them to have increased communication and trust from local districts. Several methods for reducing information collection requirements were suggested. Sampling, instead of acquiring data on every district, was recommended. Consolidation of forms was also suggested.

On a related topic, sentiment with regard to the state plan was that if it is primarily a contract between state and federal government, it can be made much simpler than the current form. In other words, participants prefer to reduce the effort spent on a compliance plan so that they could begin to develop plans with greater utility for supporting operational policy decisions.

Facilitators Related to Organizational Factors

A third key problem reported by participants is that differences among organizations in policies, procedures, and objectives tend to reduce opportunities for achieving coordinated planning. For example, differences in philosophy or objectives among agencies such as vocational education, CETA, and vocational rehabilitation are seen as breeding conflict. One facilitator commonly suggested to deal with this situation is an interagency cooperative agreement.

This agreement, generally instituted at the state level, is considered facilitative because it specifies the roles and responsibilities of each agency, delineates their boundaries of operations and areas of overlap. Such an agreement can serve as a basis to overcome disputes over "turf" that tend to plague vocational education. In order to be effective, however, cooperative agreements need to be followed through down to levels of service delivery. Our local respondents indicated that cooperative agreements consummated between state agencies are sometimes disregarded at the local level. Perhaps

state divisions should encourage the development of local cooperative agreements, or take other steps to foster implementation of cooperative agreements through incentives to the delivery system.

Besides differences in the objectives and philosophy of organizations, there is considerable controversy surrounding the issues of vocational education data availability and usefulness. The most common manifestation of the controversy is in the disagreement often found between the state division of vocational education and local districts regarding labor market data justification for approval of instructional programs.

The seriousness and frequency of this controversy suggests that some type of arbitration procedure would be useful to resolve data-use conflicts. In a number of states there is an appeal process which allows local districts to submit local data they have assembled as tentative justification for programs which are not suggested by the state-generated labor market data. In these cases, the state has the final decision in program approval, but considers input from local advisory committees, local employer surveys, etc., as evidence along with state employment service data. If the local data appear to have been generated in a thorough and sound manner, the state will generally allow a program to be initiated. This degree of flexibility is desirable. However, the study team suggests that it might be desirable to have a third, neutral party involved in such decisions. The presence of a neutral group could reduce the tendency for either state or local to sway the decision.

Sometimes differences in organizational objectives and activities, which would tend to impede coordination, can be overcome by providing financial and other incentives. An example in practice involves a situation in which high school students receive part of their training at the high school and other parts using facilities of the local postsecondary institution. These institutions have negotiated an arrangement whereby the portions of time that the student spends at each institution are credited toward that agency's enrollment count. Both the high school and the postsecondary institution receive a state reimbursement for training. In another example, the state legislature provided funds for adult education that had to be divided by negotiation in local councils comprised of secondary and postsecondary institutions. In such cases, the agencies must coordinate to achieve a consensus for allocating the funds. The prospect of acquiring additional funding serves as a stimulus to participate in the council's activities. It is difficult, however, to judge the effectiveness of this approach as a facilitator, since it was reported that in some councils the allocation of funds was complicated by competition among agencies to increase their share.

Organizational structures are sometimes as important as objectives in determining how effectively institutions can coordinate. For example, one structure which is widely perceived as a facilitator, at all levels of the delivery system, is a regional structure of state division service for program supervision and planning. Many local staff in states with this arrangement felt that having a representative familiar with the needs of their region was an asset. The regional staff were welcomed for their ability to interpret state rules and regulations to the districts, inform local administrators of events occurring in other areas of the state, and to assist the district in acquiring funds and planning decisions. This seems to be true, whether the state staff is situated in regional field offices or housed in the state division headquarters. The important concept is that specific individuals are assigned to contact particular districts and help these districts with administrative activities.

Another example of structural change that can facilitate coordination is the establishment of a liaison staff member who is charged with coordination among different educational agencies at the state level, and/or the legislature. Individuals in these roles have an opportunity to increase organizational awareness of other agencies' activities. Liaison staff are able to discover and take advantage of common areas of interest among organizations.

Time-cycle and schedule differences among organizations are sometimes difficult to work out because they may be based on legislative requirements or reinforced by teachers' union policy. Open entry/exit systems of vocational instruction are operated by some institutions, particularly at the postsecondary level. These organizations are able to serve the needs of many client groups such as CETA. However, establishing an open entry/exit system may entail considerable preparatory cost and may expose the organization to certain risks. There is the possibility of enrollment decline due to students entering with advanced standing and/or leaving early. These disincentives lessen the attractiveness of schedule modifications which could facilitate coordination.

In addition to scheduling, there are other areas in which organizations can synchronize activities. Considerable opportunities exist for improvement in coordination for data collection and planning procedures. For example, there were a number of comments about multiple agencies requesting the same items of information from client groups. In one case, an agency identified items on another organization's data collection instrument that could be useful to its own purposes, if modified. The organization negotiated over the content of the instrument, resulting in greater "mileage" from one data collection effort.

It has been suggested to the study team that the principle of synchronizing planning efforts could be applied to the various plans prepared by state education agencies for the federal government. It was thought that fragmentation and compartmentalization in planning (and implementation) could be minimized if the several state plans could be integrated into one state plan for education to be transmitted to the federal government.

Facilitators Related to Environmental Concerns

The fourth key problem reported as affecting coordinated vocational education planning is that various pressures in the environment surrounding vocational education tend to reduce the ability of agencies to produce joint plans that are firm and that can be implemented. Three examples of the problem are as follows:

- the difficulty of determining available future funding reduces the ability of organizations to produce viable joint, long-run plans
- the difficulty of anticipating social, industrial, and demographic changes reduces the ability of organizations to produce meaningful plans
- the organizational position of vocational agencies in the education hierarchy and the political pressures to which they are exposed reduces the potential for implementation of plans that could be developed in a coordinated framework

Relatively few facilitators suggested by respondents addressed these environmental situations. Indeed, it is difficult to come up with practical solutions for overcoming environmental pressures that impede coordination of vocational education institutions. However, some vocational educators do have tactics to help cope with the environment.

For example, local administrators of vocational education reported using their local advisory committees as advocacy groups. Members of the local advisory committee, as informed lay people, can sometimes influence the board of education and district administration more than the vocational administrator. This relationship can help the vocational administrator bypass political pressure from the community. However, the degree to which the local advisory council can be used in this manner is limited. Open conflict between the local advisory council and the board of education can be damaging to the vocational programs.

Persons who engage in coordination for vocational education planning need information about future funding levels if they are to be in a position to make informed and realistic decisions, and if they are to have confidence that their decisions can be implemented. In many states, legislative budgeting processes do not permit the state division of vocational education to approve state funding to local education agencies two or more years into the future. The establishment of a "forward funding" mechanism by states has been suggested as a way to facilitate the effectiveness of coordination efforts.

The variability of the economic and social environment surrounding vocational education is a problem that has no easy answers. Like other institutions in American society, vocational education agencies must learn to deal with an environment of accelerating change.

Section II

Barriers to Coordination in Vocational Education Planning

Coordination in vocational education planning is not a new phenomenon. However, Congress has recently given increased attention to the need for more effective coordination in vocational education planning. For example, Title II of the Education Amendments of 1976 has, as one of its major purposes, "... to assist states in improving the use of all resources available to them for vocational education and manpower training by *involving a wide range of agencies and individuals concerned with education and training within the state in the development of the vocational education plans* [emphasis added]." This Act contains numerous mandated requirements for coordination in vocational education planning. It includes the kinds of groups which are to be involved in coordinated efforts in vocational education planning and their responsibilities.

This study is concerned with the barriers that affect coordination in planning at the local level, at the state level, and between the state and local levels. A better understanding of these barriers to coordination in vocational education planning, and the ways in which they affect coordinative relationships, is a requisite for designing strategies for improving statewide vocational education planning. Statewide vocational education planning represents a negotiation, accommodation, and integration of all of the diverse interests and concerns of agencies and individuals involved in the future and direction of vocational education.

The narrative about barriers to coordination in vocational education planning which is presented next provides the reader with a broader and clearer understanding of the specific ways in which these barriers are manifested in the actual planning context of vocational education. The barriers to coordination are presented in the following way. A problem that functions as a barrier to coordination in vocational education planning is stated and is then followed by a description of its effects on coordination. Each of the barriers is described both in terms of a theoretical perspective and its operational implications. A more complete understanding of the theoretical perspective that is presented can be gained by reading Chapter III in this report. Examples of planning problem situations that reflect the coordination barriers are described next. These problem situations are those that were frequently expressed in the dialogues. Statements that were characteristic of comments expressed in the dialogue sessions are also presented.

Problem

A lack of direction and an absence of a consensus about what roles and responsibilities different agencies should play in developing statewide plans for vocational education make it difficult to implement an overall framework for coordination in vocational education planning.

The original impetus for this study grew out of observations by the study team that statewide planning for vocational education, and coordination practices necessary to support statewide planning, were still in an early stage of development. Statewide planning refers here to planning that includes the systematic involvement and coordination of all groups, agencies, and institutions who contribute to, support, or have a stake in vocational education. This planning through systematic coordination then culminates in a plan for vocational education that represents a negotiation, accommodation, and finally an integration of the contributions of all local providers of vocational education, the state agency(ies) responsible for vocational education, and the other groups who coordinate with them.

The findings of the study team suggest that statewide vocational education planning as defined above does not seem to have been achieved because:

- there is an absence of comprehensive plans for coordination efforts to achieve statewide vocational education planning
- there is an absence of policies and procedures for developing statewide plans

The results of this year's work also suggest that the achievement of statewide coordination in vocational education planning has been impeded by at least four barriers: (1) a lack of leadership in statewide vocational education planning; (2) uncertainties about roles and responsibilities for coordination in vocational education planning; (3) the existence of multiple agencies and governance structures having similar responsibilities for providing vocational education; and (4) the compliance orientation of the current planning process.

Examples of how these four barriers affect the process of coordination in producing statewide plans for vocational education are presented next.

Barrier: A Lack of Direction

On the basis of the comments of participants in the dialogue sessions, it can be inferred that a major barrier to the development of a truly articulated state plan for vocational education is that no agency has taken the initiative to develop such a plan. This state of affairs continues to exist in spite of the numerous expressions by participants across all segments of the educational community involved in the dialogues that the federally-mandated state plan is not satisfactory as a state's plan for vocational education.

In a number of states, participants in the dialogue sessions expressed a desire to develop a planning process that would be more proactively oriented than the current local application/state plan process. To implement such a planning process would require not only a mechanism for achieving common goals at different levels of the system, but also some organization or unit that is recognized as the leader or sponsor of the process. Many participants felt that this initiative should be vested in the state division of vocational education.

Barrier: Uncertainties About Roles and Responsibilities

In Chapter III, *The Context for Coordination in Vocational Education Planning,* uncertainty of role descriptions is listed among the secondary factors impeding coordination, even when other underlying conditions would tend to support interaction. This problem can apply both to individuals' own role perceptions and to those of staff in other organizations.

Some participants in the dialogue sessions expressed the perception that there is a lack of consensus as to what roles and responsibilities state, local, and related agencies should have in the vocational education planning process. A program supervisor in one of the states expressed the impact of this situation in the following words:

> There is confusion about roles and responsibilities in the planning process which results in frustration and a negative attitude toward the planning process as a whole . . .

The following quote represents the feelings of local directors in one state regarding coordination problems among agencies:

> There have been a lot of discussions about articulation and so on, between secondary and postsecondary. It's a slow process, and one thing that inhibits planning in that area is that we can sit down here, we can do a lot of planning and work, and the people in the state office up there can decide that they want a different thrust in a different direction ... we've spun our wheels ...

Participants in several states commented on current coordination problems they perceived as existing between the unit of the state division of vocational education responsible for program supervision, and the unit responsible for planning, budgeting, and management information systems. Some local administrators expressed uncertainty about what units at the state level they should coordinate with for various planning activities. They were unsure of who at the state level had responsibilities for what activities. In other instances, the perception of a lack of coordination of units at the state level seemed to reduce the incentive of local administrators to coordinate with a state agency that seemed to be at odds with itself.

Multiple State Agencies Responsible for Vocational Education. Frequent comments were made in some states concerning conflicts between the state division of vocational education and other state agencies or units responsible for vocational education. In these instances, congruence in organizational responsibilities of different agencies or units stood out prominently as impeding coordinative relations between them. Participants described numerous instances of adversary relationships, breakdowns in communication, unhealthy competition, and serious conflicts over the sharing of authority and federal funds for vocational education by the different agencies or units responsible for vocational education. There was a further recognition that these interorganizational coordination problems had two ripple effects: these difficulties at the state level were a barrier to developing a unified state direction for vocational education, and they contributed to a lessening of coordination in support of vocational education planning between local level schools that operated under different state agencies or different operating units within the same state agency.

An analysis of the documents made available to the study team and an analysis of the transcripts of the dialogue sessions suggest three reasonably probable conditions as impeding effective coordinative relations (in some states) between the state division of vocational education and other state agencies or units with responsibilities for vocational education. These three conditions are that:

- active coordination with other governing bodies and units with vocational education missions legitimizes the regulatory authority and professional stature of these other bodies and units. As a result, the state division of vocational education perceives a real or potential threat to its survival. This is because the state division of vocational education has traditionally been the sole regulatory authority for vocational education, and the sole source of professional leadership or direction for vocational education.
- active coordination with other governing bodies and units for vocational education legitimizes the concept of multiple vocational education delivery systems. As a result, the integrity of vocational education as a single recognizable system becomes more difficult to defend, and the constituency-building which is needed to establish a base for legislative and administrative support is made more difficult.
- federal legislative provisions for vocational education indirectly legitimize the existence of multiple governing boards and units for vocational education by directing special set-asides for the funding of postsecondary vocational education. These provisions seem to directly contribute to an atmosphere of divisiveness and conflict over issues of funding and power in the coordination that does take place between the state division of vocational education and other state-level agencies with postsecondary authority and responsibilities.

Barrier: The Compliance Orientation Toward Planning

The federally mandated state plan for vocational education was perceived by most participants in the dialogues as too restrictive or prescriptive to serve as a basis for a useful statewide plan for vocational education. In addition, many local administrators and some state division staff expressed a reluctance to engage in coordination activities to develop state plans.

The reasons given for the reluctance to allocate resources to interagency coordinative relationships to produce state plans included: "State plans are not planning documents, they are contracts." ... "They are developed to meet federal requirements and not local/state situations." ... "State plans do not influence the direction of vocational education in the state in a noticeable way." As a result of these and similar attitudes, most state and local administrators stated that they either had not read state plan documents or, if they had, they did so only in a casual manner. These persons expressed little, if any, sense of ownership in these documents.

Problem

The specificity and perceived contradictions or inconsistencies in federal legislation for vocational education tend to: (a) create accompanying uncertainties in what is required or expected from vocational education agencies; and (b) cause vocational education agencies to divert resources from coordinated proactive planning toward compliance planning.

Barrier: Specificity in Legislation

Coordination in vocational education planning is mandated or implicit in many of the specific legislative provisions of Title II of the Education Amendments of 1976. From a theoretical perspective, excess specificity affects a number of conditions that are seen as necessary for coordination to occur. For example, if provisions of the Act are perceived as too inflexible and impractical with respect to special local situations, incentive for coordination in planning to deal with these provisions is minimal. From a theoretical perspective, other likely effects on coordination in vocational education planning that result from the specificity of provisions in the Act include: (a) reducing the incentive of organizations to be innovative or flexible in their planning; (b) causing organizations to modify existing needs, objectives, and activities to comply with legislation for fear of losing funds; and (c) restricting organizations from modifying procedures that would enable them to improve coordination with other organizations.

Examples of situations that point up how perceptions of current legislative provisions create uncertainties in the expectations for vocational education agencies and tend to cause them to divert resources from coordinated proactive planning toward compliance planning include the following:

- federal funding provisions versus special state and local situations
- federal thrusts for promoting sex euqity in vocational education programs that are inadequately funded
- data and reporting systems that are unduly burdensome and impractical
- evaluation for compliance versus program improvement

Prescriptive and Restrictive Funding Provisions in Federal Legislation. The program approval and funding process under federal legislative provisions ties dollars to formulas and purposes. Categorical aid and formula provisions were seen by some administrators as good mechanisms for highlighting federal thrusts and for promoting equity in the distribution of funds. In practice, these conditions were believed at times to do just the opposite. One local administrator indicated that:

> The present manner in which money comes from the federal level frequently disrupts efforts at coordination at lower levels and contributes to turf building . . .

Many administrators pointed out that few school districts seemed ready to reject the opportunity to apply for their entitlement of federal vocational education funds. There are many pressures on state divisions of vocational education and local education agencies and institutions to apply for all monies available to them for educational purposes. It was pointed out that local and state administrators usually go where the money is, and lesser priority is sometimes given to compelling needs if these needs are not compatible with federal formula prescriptions and restrictions. In discussing this issue a local administrator stated that:

> The state department people pointed out that we have criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and categories x, y, and z. And there was no place where funds were available for meeting this particular need, although they agreed that the need existed . . .

Vocational education administrators expressed the belief that federal dollars under the Amendments were useful for supplementing state and local dollars for vocational education; but in many instances these dollars were not critical for implementing new programs or continuing existing ones. This fact can make the extensive coordination that is required for the preparation of local applications and fiscal reports seem overly burdensome. One district reported that it operates its vocational programs without federal dollars and without coordinating its planning with the state agency because the cost of the paperwork required for local application and reporting purposes exceeds their federal dollar entitlement.

Sex Equity. The vocational education provisions of the Education Amendments of 1976 have an explicit mandate for promoting sex equity in vocational education. The vocational education provisions of these Amendments require each state to create the position of a sex equity coordinator whose functions are also mandated. Some sex equity coordinators, and others, were unhappy with having legislative prescriptions for the coordinators because they felt that limited funding could make it difficult to adequately address specific state or local situations. Limited funding and staffing for sex equity was perceived by local administrators as affecting the ongoing coordination with local schools that would be needed to plan for improving sex equity in vocational education.

The specificity of mandates for sex equity seems to have also created uncertainties in what is required or expected of vocational education agencies in their efforts to coordinate in planning for sex equity. The problems of restructuring traditional enrollment patterns in vocational education programs is a case in point. There seemed to be a broad consensus among the participants in the dialogue sessions that the schools were implicitly being mandated to restructure traditional enrollment patterns in vocational education programs. But administrators contended that the schools were not the barrier to restructuring traditional enrollment patterns in vocational education programs. Instead, the major barriers to restructuring were given as: (a) peer group pressures; (b) parental attitudes; and (c) the fact that in some smaller communities employers are reluctant to hire women to work jobs currently performed by men.

Secondary vocational education administrators reported that many females who indicated their intention to enroll in a traditionally male-oriented vocational education program did not follow through and actually enroll. Although all of the reasons just mentioned were indicated, fear of negative

reactions from friends and parental displeasure seemed to be the most important ones for preventing enrollments by these females. As one local administrator commented:

> Parental attitudes are a problem with attracting females into traditionally male programs. Mom doesn't want to tell her neighbor across the fence that her daughter is going into carpentry . . .

In the case of male students considering enrollment in a traditionally female-oriented program, peer-group pressure seemed to be the most important reason for not enrolling.

Another problem mentioned was a lack of coordinated local/state agency planning despite recognition of the need for restructuring of enrollment patterns in vocational education. The provisions of the Amendments with respect to funding and multiplicity of functions of the sex equity coordinator was perceived as impractical for permitting the kind of state/local agency coordination necessary to implement successful strategies to achieve a restructuring of enrollment patterns.

Some school administrators were concerned that federal or state audits of their distribution of enrollments by sex in vocational education programs would invite unfair criticisms of their efforts to promote sex equity. They felt that they continue to support school staff in promoting sex equity but that administrators and teachers do not control student or community values and attitudes. These administrators welcomed coordination with state divisions of vocational staff to promote sex equity in vocational education. However, it was expressed that coordination efforts should not focus on a "numbers" or compliance game; otherwise, effective communication for purposes of promoting sex equity could be impeded.

Data Collection. The burdens associated with collecting and transmitting data and preparing plans and reports for compliance purposes can divert resources needed for proactive planning and can create frictions in coordinative relationships.

In terms of the theoretical background, the growing concern for compliance encroaches on the basis for organizational exchange by reducing the availability of staff and other resources to support forward-looking, coordinative planning. By causing organizations to focus attention on information and data that are not directly relevant to their own planning needs, this orientation discourages organizations from placing a high priority on assembly and transmission of data that could be functional in planning. The net effect is to reduce the incentive for vocational education organizations to coordinate in a vertical hierarchy (local, state, federal).

Local administrators believe that they are not compensated adequately for their time and trouble in providing information to the state education agency. Likewise, the state agency has a concern that federal funding is out of proportion to the effort it invests in compliance-directed planning and evaluation activities.

Examples of problem situations that are associated with collecting and transmitting data and/or preparing plans and reports include the following:

- Federally mandated reporting system requirements that are perceived as problematic, unduly burdensome, and impractical to implement
- Evaluations for compliance with federal legislative provisions versus evaluations for program improvement

Reporting Systems. The provisions of the Education Amendments of 1976 promote coordination of efforts between state divisions of vocational education and local education agencies and institutions with respect to generating accurate and timely data for state planning purposes and for meeting the requirements of the National Vocational Education Data Reporting and Accounting System (VEDS). Participants in the dialogue sessions expressed a number of reasons for a lack of effective coordination between the state and local level in planning for the collection and transmission of the legislatively required data. These reasons included: (a) impracticalities and uncertainties in acquiring and applying certain of the mandated data; (b) excessive time, cost, and staff that are required to generate the mandated data; and (c) seeming conflicts in definitions of terms.

VEDS, operated through the National Center for Educational Statistics, received special mention for creating unnecessary and impractical data burdens on state and local level education agencies and institutions. Some participants pointed out that they saw no reason why every public school in the country offering vocational instruction had to be included in the data collection process. And surely, federal policy-oriented questions about vocational education could be developed from data collected through sampling techniques. Other participants pointed out that generating and reporting individual student data was extremely time-consuming and costly to them.

> The VEDS system would present a problem in that many schools are operating on hand ledgers and do not have the resources, the manpower, the technology, or the expertise to put in a program type cost accounting system . . .

Others mentioned that the U.S. Office of Education instructional program taxonomy was inconsistent with local course or program descriptions. Administrators at the local and state levels also pointed to the continuing resistance to VEDS by the Council of Chief State School Officers through its Committee on Evaluation and Information Systems as further evidence that federal agencies and/or the Congress are creating an undue data burden on the states. Some local vocational education administrators reported that they hesitated to identify persons as disadvantaged or handicapped in the process of preparing local applications or in meeting reporting requirements because they felt such identification conflicted with present interpretations for the maintenance of privacy.

One effect of diverting local resources from program support toward the collection and transmission of data for compliance purposes seems to be a reduced incentive for vertical interagency coordinative relationships between the state division of vocational education and local districts, and between this state agency and the federal agencies requesting legislatively mandated data. Some participants made statements to the effect that if federal agencies could "get their act together" consolidating and coordinating their data requests, it would be a needed step toward promoting better state and local level data generation and reporting.

Program Evaluation. Local education agencies and institutions have traditionally regarded state-initiated program evaluations as one mechanism for promoting the improvement of instruction. In state and local coordinated program evaluation efforts, curriculum, teaching, and facilities are reviewed with respect to what should be improved to make the program more relevant and effective. The outcome of the evaluation process is typically a suggested plan for program improvements.

The process of program evaluation is potentially threatening to any organization. There are, therefore, carefully worked out protocols and procedures for coordinating the planning, operation, and follow-through activities that are part of the program evaluation process. The legislative provisions for evaluation of vocational education programs have created an atmosphere of uncertainty at the state and local level as to the continued viability of current procedures and protocols for local program evaluations. There is a perception that program evaluation is likely to shift toward assessing programs for compliance with federal legislative provisions rather than for program improvement.

Several outcomes were seen as likely to occur. These outcomes included: (1) a reduction in incentives to local agencies to coordinate with the state agency in developing evaluation procedures; and (2) a possible shift in program activities or resources at the local level toward mandated legislative provisions in order to reduce the probability of losing funds.

Barrier: Contradictions in Legislative Provisions

An unfortunate consequence of the multiple priorities implied in federal legislation affecting vocational education is that the legislation suggests interpretations which can lead to interagency conflict. According to the theory of coordination as described in the following chapter, two of the necessary conditions for coordination are awareness and similarity of goals and values. When there is a possibility of multiple or differing interpretations of legislation, there can be differences in the goals for addressing the problems.

Notable examples of the potential for differing interpretations of legislation reported by our respondents were:

- multiple and potentially conflicting definitions of various special target populations identified in legislation
- potential conflict between the legislative implication that the maximum number of students have access to some type of vocational education, and the emphasis on use of training-related placement as a performance criterion, particularly as it impinges on smaller, less industrialized communities
- potential conflict between the legislative emphasis on enrolling handicapped, disadvantaged, or nontraditional students and the emphasis on use of training-related placement as a performance cirterion

Conflicting Definitions and Labeling of Special Populations. The identification and reporting of handicapped and disadvantaged students, as well as other definitional problems, were sore points with many local education administrators. Federally prescribed definitions with respect to disadvantaged and handicapped persons, those with limited English-speaking proficiency, postsecondary, adult, etc., were perceived as being in conflict with local (or state) practices. A consequence of conflicting definitions can be to create uncertainties in how best to direct program planning to meet the needs of students. One local administrator stated it this way:

> What is a meaningful definition at the local level becomes less meaningful at the state level and becomes gibberish at the federal level. The gibberish is recognized and we are told to tighten up. And as we get our definitions tighter and tighter it causes us to force our programming to meet the definition rather than to meet the need . . .

It also seemed to some local administrators that there were contradictions in definitions of the same terms in different federal laws.

Conflicts in definitions create additional burdens on local education agencies and institutions because they must respond with data reports to a multiplicity of federal and state agencies that operate within the framework of different legislation. As a result, local education agencies become uncertain as to what they are required to do and coordinative relationships are disrupted with state agencies which make demands for compliance.

The pervasiveness of these definitional and labeling problems suggests that there is a lack of interagency (state, local, and federal) coordinative relationships to deal effectively with them. Interestingly, there were strong expressions from many administrators in the dialogue sessions that they continue to support vocational education for special populations. They also believe that criticisms that vocational education does not actively provide for special needs students are possibly the result of inadequacies in federal reporting systems.

Conflicts Resulting from the Use of Training-Related Placement as a Measure of Program Success. Evidence of training-related placement as a measure of program success under federal vocational education legislation was especially troubling to secondary school administrators participating in the dialogues, and even more so if the secondary school had only two or three programs and was located in an area having little industrial employment. These administrators pointed out that many communities cannot offer new or additional vocational education programs because of inadequate local financial resources, tenure considerations, etc. As a result, vocational education programs that are in place must, over time, serve the greatest number of students having diverse needs, abilities, and interests. These inplace programs must also provide these students with the best mix of exploratory, employability, and employment skills that can be taught under these circumstances. In this context, the use of training-related placement as a measure for evaluating program success was perceived by local administrators as unfair, especially if the state program approval and funding process gives significant weight to this measure.

In the following quote, a state program supervisor explains why local schools in rural areas of the state consider placement related to local labor market need a poor measure of success:

> ... all the people in that county load pulpwood. Are we going to train all the people in that county to load pulpwood? Obviously, no, we're not going to do that, because they aren't going to load pulpwood, they're going to get away from there as fast as they can ...

It was also pointed out that if training-related placement is to be a major criterion for funding secondary vocational education programs, then such a criterion is inimical to the federal thrust to serve special populations that are the most difficult to retain in school or to place on training-related jobs; and especially in times of high unemployment.

These facts seemed to produce an unfavorable climate for the state division to try and effect coordinative relationships with these local education agencies for the purpose of promoting instructional program redirection.

Problem

Differences in organizational policies, procedures, and objectives of agencies concerned with vocational education and manpower training tend to impede coordinated planning by making it more difficult for such agencies to communicate with and have access to each other, and by increasing the costs or risks of coordination.

Barrier: Differences in Planning Cycle and Scheduling

A major category of organizational barriers to coordination in vocational education planning is that of scheduling and the timing cycle for planning. Differences in scheduling and timing reduce interorganizational access in two ways. First differences in schedules reduce the probability that

organizations can coordinate their efforts to serve the same client groups. If agencies are unable to share client groups, they may decide that coordination and joint planning are fruitless activities. Another problem is that organizations which have a desire to coordinate their planning may find it difficult to accomplish because of incompatible planning/budgeting cycles. Examples that reflect how scheduling and timing cycles for planning affect coordinative relationships are as follows:

- differences in schedules and calendars of secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, and CETA
- a lack of synchronization between the budgeting cycle and vocational education planning activities
- the timing cycle for state plan development (including the annual program plan and accountability report) limits the ability of local schools and other organizations to contribute to the development of state plan documents

Calendar and daily schedule differences can impede coordination in planning services between secondary and postsecondary institutions, and between vocational education and CETA. For example, quarter-based schedules of postsecondary institutions do not dovetail with semester schedules of secondary schools. Programs that could involve shared use of secondary and postsecondary facilities are impeded by this factor. Similarly, clients are accepted by CETA and are eligible for training at almost any time during the year, but many vocational programs have limited entry points during the year and cannot accommodate CETA clients in between the entry point times. As a result, some CETA administrators regard coordinated planning with vocational education as not worthwhile. Instead, they prefer to deal with community-based organizations and private vocational institutions which are more oriented toward schedule flexibility.

A major problem that seems to affect coordination in support of vocational education planning at both state and local levels is the fact that the local application for program approval and funding required under federal legislative provisions may be submitted to the state before the state is able to know how much federal/state funding is available to it. A member of a state division planning staff expressed the situation aptly:

> One of the big problems is that we don't know early enough within a given school year, or budget year, what programs are needed and what the legislature is going to fund. By the time the two decisions come together, it's almost too late for planning . . .

The commonly-expressed effects of this lack of synchronization are creation of uncertainties in local level planning and stifling of new program initiatives.

A similar problem that was expressed in the dialogues was that the timelines are so constrained for preparing and submitting state plan documents for vocational education to the U.S. Office of Education that there is insufficient time for organizations outside the state division to contribute effective input. In fact, in one state, local plans are submitted to the state *after* the state plan has been submitted to the federal government. In another example, copies of the state plan were not made available to local districts until more than six months after federal approval of the plan.

Barrier: Differences in Policy and Procedures for Interaction

Scheduling and timing barriers represent specific examples of differences in procedures for planning among organizations. However, a more general and pervasive problem is present planning procedures of vocational education agencies which tend to neglect or insufficiently address the

purposes and outcomes of interagency involvement in planning. Two examples of this situation are:

- a lack of specific plans and documented policies covering the purposes of interaction with other agencies
- a lack of adequate resources (staff and time) for effective organizational liaison

Most participants in the dialogues said that they considered coordination important, and often mentioned settings where coordination activities took place. Many of these persons stated that they did not, however, always have a clear conception of what such activities or sessions were supposed to accomplish. A general perception was that interagency coordination would be more useful if there were adequate policies and procedures for coordination efforts.

For example, there were several instances where participants pointed out that they were in the process of trying to create an effective interagency coordinating body. One problem they faced was how to bridge the gap between sharing what each group was doing, and defining how coordinating agencies can orchestrate their efforts to improve services to clients. In another example, several participants suggested that there is no formal mechanism to achieve coordinated planning between CETA and vocational education, resulting in a relationship that must rely on personalities.

Numerous comments were also made concerning the inadequacy of resources available for coordinating planning. At the state division of vocational education the resource problem was seen as inadequate funds to provide sufficient staff to link with local schools, and/or a shortage of time due to paperwork requirements and daily business. At the local level, the resource problem was seen as insufficient support for instruction and/or lack of communication from the state division. In any case, local level respondents frequently commented on the need for more technical assistance support from the state agency, while both state and local persons pointed up the need for better interlevel communication in support of a wide range of planning activities for vocational education.

Barrier: Differences in Objectives

Even when agencies are able to overcome problems of planning cycle synchronization and have established formal policies for interagency relations, they still may be unable to pursue coordinated planning due to differences in objectives or priorities. The theory of interagency coordination emphasizes the importance of similarity among agency goals and values or ideologies as a necessary condition for coordination.

Differences in objectives regarding skill development and/or outcomes for clients are responsible for lack of congruence among the various organizations preparing individuals for work roles. For example, respondents reported wide variations in the perceived success of coordination between vocational education and CETA. Differences in objectives or philosophy were considered significant impediments to this relationship.

From the perspective of vocational educators, CETA focuses on short-term skill development with the objective of placing an individual in unsubsidized employment as soon as possible. Vocational educators prefer to place more emphasis on providing a cluster of skills or preparing students with an in-depth orientation to a career field. Vocational administrators indicated skepticism toward the value of short-term skill programs which they regarded as insufficient preparation for the world of work.

On the other hand, CETA staff felt that vocational education programs are inflexible, that vocational education is unwilling to share its turf (or expertise) with other agencies, and that vocational

education is more interested in CETA dollars than CETA clients. Dialogue participants reported some very satisfactory relationships between the two agencies, but the majority had encountered conflict that stemmed from differences of philosophy and objectives.

In cases where organizations share the same objectives, there may be significant differences in the relative priority assigned to the objectives by each agency. Our dialogue participants reported a number of situations in which differences in priorities caused conflicts among organizations and made it difficult for them to come to terms with certain issues in coordinative planning.

For example, it was noted that secondary level vocational administrators place a somewhat higher priority on student interest as a factor for program initiation and continuation than they do to the factor of potential employment opportunities for program completers. The reverse seemed to be true for state staff persons who represented administration, planning and management information systems. These differences in priorities were perceived as a source of friction in interlevel coordinative relationships for program approval and funding purposes.

Another example is the difference in priority given to training students for local labor market need versus training for mobility. This issue was reported as a source of friction at various levels: between the community and the vocational program, between the district and the state agency, and among school districts in a particular area. In situations where most rural and small schools train their students for jobs in distant (and sometimes for several) metropolitan areas, there is a great potential for duplication of instructional programs among institutions and a disincentive to coordinate planning to make the best use of available resources. This is due, in part, to two factors: (a) these districts do not feel that local labor market needs are the basis for instructional programs; and (b) it is difficult to determine what programs are most likely to lead to employment when there is the lack of a definable labor market area for graduates.

Barrier: Differences in Perception of Data

Differences in the way organizations view data for vocational education planning also was found to be a barrier to coordination in vocational education planning.

A number of the conditions theoretically necessary for coordination are impeded by this situation. Mutual awareness and communication are threatened because organizations disagree on procedures for obtaining and utilizing data. Furthermore, lack of consensus on data implies that, to a certain extent, organizations have differing perceptions of the problems of vocational education planning.

A large number of local and state level participants were currently involved in coordination efforts that deal with employment data. These persons had much to say about their experiences as data suppliers or data consumers. Many of those placed in the role of data consumers (e.g., school administrators) often doubted the accuracy and/or the usefulness of the employment data that were provided to them by data suppliers (e.g., state division planners, state employment services personnel). Specific viewpoints on employment data expressed by consumers of such data included the following: (a) there is a lack of correspondence between available employment data breakdowns and local needs; (b) there are differences in the useability of available employment data between urban and rural areas; and (c) there are contradictions between the data that are available to local schools and experiences of vocational education graduates in the labor market.

Many employment data suppliers, on the other hand, seemed relatively certain that adequate employment data are available for vocational education planning purposes. They indicated that vocational education data consumers claim otherwise, but this is because they either don't know what data to ask for, or these consumers don't understand how to use employment data that are available to them.

Another frequent comment by data suppliers was that they felt that data users tended to manipulate data to fit preconceived notions. This perception was expressed by state division staff as the reason why they are reluctant to accept locally-generated information that districts sometimes submit in contradiction to state-generated labor market data.

There was also little consensus between data suppliers and data consumers about the meaning of "best" in the term "best available employment data." Employment data consumers inferred that when data suppliers have employment data available, it is "best" because it is available, not best because it is targeted to the specific needs of data consumers. On the other hand, data suppliers sometimes expressed the view that data consumers did not appreciate the time constraints and technical difficulties inherent in reformatting or reinterpreting employment data that were originally prepared for purposes other than vocational education planning.

Employment data suppliers and consumers regarded each other as being sincere, capable, and dedicated individuals. On the other hand, it seemed evident in the dialogues that there were significant problems in communication between the two groups. Coordinative relations do not seem to have reached the point where employment data consumers and users deal with these issues as directly and constructively as they might.

Problem

Environmental conditions surrounding vocational education agencies affect the ability of agencies to produce joint plans by limiting the degree to which individual agencies can fulfill and implement plans.

One of the significant findings that emerged from the study was the extent to which environmental conditions influence the ability of organizations to coordinate for the purpose of effective vocational education planning. This is because pressures from the environment tend to prescribe the extent to which individual organizations make and fulfill commitments to one another. On the basis of participants' comments three major barriers to coordination in planning were identified as resulting from environmental pressures. These are as follows:

- the difficulty of determining available future funding reduces the incentive for interorganizational coordination to develop long-range plans
- the difficulty of anticipating social, industrial, and demographic changes reduces the ability of organizations to produce meaningful plans
- the position of vocational agencies within the larger educational framework, and the political pressures to which the organizations are exposed, reduce the potential for implementation of plans that could be developed in a coordinated framework

These problems contribute to an unstable context for coordination in vocational education planning and generate disruptions for many of the coordination efforts that evolve during, or as a consequence of, the planning process.

Barrier: Uncertainty of Funding Levels

The level of funding is consistently a concern for all levels of the vocational education system and is one of the major constraints that must be addressed in both the annual and long-term planning process. Beyond the actual level of funding, however, lies a problem that, in some ways, is even more of a constraint. That is, the inability of planners to predict or anticipate—except in a general way—what funding levels will be from year to year.

At both state and local levels, administrators commented on the difficulty of predicting the level of funding they are to receive. Local schools experience uncertainty because they are dependent upon the budgeting cycles and funding trends of the state level. The state, in turn, is at the mercy of federal trends and cycles.

As an example, there may be major shifts from year to year in federally-funded categorical programs. Additionally, federal funding cycles differ from the actual school year. Such occurrences make it difficult (reduce the incentive) for state and local level planners to coordinate for the purpose of developing viable, long-range plans.

The local level respondents indicated to the study team that funding levels are perhaps the prime consideration when deciding whether to implement or modify vocational programs. If funding levels cannot be anticipated, it becomes extremely difficult for coordinated program planning to occur.

Barrier: Inability to Anticipate Social, Industrial, and Demographic Changes Over Time

Changing social, industrial, and demographic conditions play havoc with vocational education planning, especially planning which is undertaken for periods of three to five years into the future. Such trends exercise enormous influence over two primary resources which the vocational education system needs in order to continue its existence. These resources are: (1) students, whether youth or adults; and (2) industries and businesses which employ students after their training. Uncertainties in the social, industrial, and demographic context within which vocational education planning occurs causes pressure and strain for those attempting to coordinate for effective planning.

The respondents indicated that the requirement in the state plan process of estimating enrollments five years into the future is almost impossible to do with any degree of accuracy. One state level staff member offered the following example:

> I think the evidence of the impossibility came out in last night's paper where the [urban] school district, all of a sudden, found they were short about 750 students. They don't know what happened to them. This is from last year to this year . . .

Some administrators did suggest that two- to three-year projections of enrollments are more acceptable to them. The five-year requirement, however, was perceived as fostering a tendency toward guesswork and the creation of fictional data. Additionally, the basis for coordinated, areawide vocational education planning (e.g., between an AVTS and a community college) is severely diminished when uncertainties in future enrollments creates serious competition between institutions to fill classrooms and shops.

Another major problem described by respondents was the difficulty of using occupational projections as a basis for program planning. According to them, one large industrial facility moving in or

out of an area can invalidate the very best of occupational projections and negate any long-range planning efforts. This is an especially troublesome problem for small communities sharing a common labor market area or for those locales that derive economic sustenance from one major employer.

All in all, environmental uncertainty constrains the ability of local education agencies to think in terms of three- to five-year plans.

Barrier: Position of Vocational Agency and Political Pressures

Political pressures, internal and external to the vocational education system, are subtle, yet they exert major influences on coordination efforts for the purpose of vocational education planning. In some cases, local administrators reported that due to their position within the organizational hierarchy, they have inadequate authority to make and implement decisions. These individuals represented various roles and levels of responsibility in the local education agency or community college administration. They spoke of having to pass through several intermediaries to the superintendent of schools or the community college president before obtaining a resolution to a decision or a problem. Where local vocational administrators were low in the hierarchy, they spoke frequently about support for vocational education being dependent on attitudes of principals and superintendents.

The composition of the school board, the continuity of that membership, and the support it gives to vocational education were all perceived as important factors influencing the direction of the vocational program. The political, social, and economic interests which these members represented often contributed heavily to the addition or deletion of local vocational programs.

Extreme examples were cited where programs had been retained needlessly because an instructor's relative held an influential position on the school board, or community groups persuaded the school board and superintendent to implement a vocational program which the vocational administrator felt had low labor market demand.

At the state level, the organizational status of the vocational division within the state education agency was perceived as an influence on coordination in vocational education planning. If, for example, the state director was several steps removed, organizationally, from the chief state school officer, this limited the state director's influence on educational policy decisions and communication with the state legislature. State division staff at various levels in the divisional hierarchy commented on the ability or inability of the state division to implement its authority with local agencies. State division personnel perceived that too strict an emphasis on enforcement of regulations could result in local level political pressures exerted on the state board of education.

The fact that both state and local vocational administrators are subject to internal and external political conditions limits, to some extent, their ability to act in a coordinated manner. State division staff and a local administrator can agree that specific programs or services should be installed, but the local vocational director may have trouble "selling" these to the district, administration, board, or community. Conversely, the local administrator may desire certain changes in legislation which are supported by the state division, but the state division may not enjoy the necessary position or visibility allowing it to communicate with the legislature. These conditions are by no means universal in the states visited, nor do they necessarily prevent effective coordinated activity in support of planning. However, at nearly every level, there were comments about the constraints imposed by political environments which make the realities of educational planning more complex and difficult.

Summary

The establishment of effective coordinative relationships is an essential component of vocational education planning and numerous ways to facilitate coordination were described in this chapter. These facilitators to coordination were found in the literature or were suggested by persons who are currently involved in coordination activities in support of vocational education planning.

This study focused on the process of coordination that results in a statewide vocational education plan. Such a plan represents a negotiation, accommodation, and integration of all the diverse interests and concerns of agencies and individuals involved in the future and direction of vocational education.

Lack of direction and uncertainties about roles and responsibilities for coordination in support of statewide vocational education planning, the compliance orientation toward planning, excess specificity in legislation, restrictive funding, burdens associated with the collection and transmission of data, conflicting definitions and labeling of special populations, differences in planning cycles and scheduling, differences in organizational objectives, and the influences of environmental conditions surrounding vocational education planning were some of the major barriers reported by participants that affect coordination in vocational education planning at the local level, at the state level, and between local and state levels.

These barriers and their effects upon coordination were described in an attempt to provide a better understanding of the current state of coordination in vocational education planning. A better understanding of coordination in vocational education planning can serve as a basis for designing strategies for improving statewide vocational education planning.

CHAPTER III

THE CONTEXT FOR COORDINATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PLANNING

Coordination is a very simple term, and perhaps deceptively so. It is used so often by administrators and legislators, that it has become a basic truth—it is good for agencies to coordinate. The "need for more coordination" is probably the most frequent suggestion for improvement in public agencies, and why not? Coordination is supposed to eliminate boundaries, bridge gaps, improve service delivery, reduce duplication and administrative overlap, and enhance the efficient use of resources. The usual expectations are that policies should be mutually supportive rather than contradictory, and that people should not work at cross purposes, but contribute to a common end.[1] Togetherness, unity, and concerted action seem to be the inherent good of coordinative relationships. But pervasive and continual complaints about coordination—or the lack of it—seem to bear out Cohen's[2] observation that it is not a simple phenomenon. It is difficult to implement, and when implemented, prone to failure.

If coordination is intuitively a worthy endeavor, then there is reason for concern. This is true not only because coordination efforts are "failure prone", but because the growing sentiment is that coordination is a vague, imprecise, and probably useless term. This sentiment is clearly stated by Esterline in concluding that:

> "Coordination is becoming, if it hasn't already become, a *buzzword* that is used in government circles somewhat carelessly and carries with it the implication that coordination is the panacea for all that is wrong with government today. I think that this is dangerous and unfortunate for those of us who are seriously trying to make it work."[3]

The intent of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the nature of coordinative relationships which can serve as a basis for improving coordination in vocational education planning. The chapter is analytic rather than prescriptive. It is an attempt to understand the concept of coordination, and to explore the factors related to its success. Suggestions on how coordination can be facilitated will be explicit. However, these will only be suggestive, and will arise only from an understanding of the factors which underlie coordinative behavior.

The chapter serves to provide the background for interpreting the results of the investigation as detailed in the previous chapter. This background is invaluable, since many of the facilitators and barriers to coordination which were identified in the study can be better understood given the context provided in this chapter. In addition, the chapter provides the reader with the conceptual framework used by the interviewers when eliciting pertinent information from respondents, and the framework used by project staff when the information was subsequently abstracted from interview transcripts.

The chapter is divided into five major sections which attempt to unfold the complexities underlying the phenomenon of coordination. The sections are:

- *The Concept of Coordination,* which examines definitionally and conceptually the meaning and dimensions of coordination

- *Coordination in Vocational Education,* which details entities and avenues for coordination in vocational education
- *Basic Necessities for Interorganizational Relations,* which identifies and describes some basic factors which have been found to have significant impact on coordination. These factors seem to be the basic conditions which must exist before establishing successful coordinative relationships.
- *Secondary Factors Affecting Coordinative Relationships,* which describes selected organizational characteristics which help to explain coordinative behavior. Although the basic necessities for coordination are met, barriers to coordination may still exist because of selected organizational characteristics.
- *Barriers and Facilitators of Coordination,* which examines some of the barriers and facilitators to coordination which have been identified in related literature. An attempt is made to give some indication of how these facilitators enhance coordination.

The Concept of Coordination

Coordination is defined by Webster as "bringing together into a common action, movement or condition; to harmonize; to act together in a smooth concerted way." This perspective on coordination refers to commonality of purpose, unity, and concert in action. It reflects coordination as an orchestrated, articulated system bound together by unity of purpose. But in practice, this unity may not be necessary as a prerequisite for coordination.

Such an instance is the interpretation of coordination as the process of exchange.[4,5] Here, coordination is defined as the exchange of needed resources between two or more organizations. In this context, resources are used in a most general sense to mean money, personnel, or equipment; or less tangible items such as information or advice. Merely exchanging items for some purpose—any purpose—denotes an act of coordination. Even securing the consent of one agency fits within the exchange perspective of coordination. Commonality of purpose is unnecessary. This perspective allows the concept of coordination to encompass a wider scope of organizations which can be potentially defined as participants in a coordinative relationship.

Coordination then is an organized effort. It involves more than one party. In its simplest sense, it can mean mere exchange and refer to a wide range of organizations, or it can be restricted to refer to a cohesive, interrelated system of organizations working toward similar or common purposes. The complexity of coordination in its true sense becomes readily apparent when one considers the negotiation, integration, and accommodation necessary to achieve interorganizational or interunit cohesiveness. Bargaining must take place to reconcile differences, and adjustments become necessary to address the disparities between structures, processes, and ideologies.

As manifested in public agencies, however, coordination takes many different forms which may require different degrees of cohesiveness and, hance, different forms of integration and accommodation.

Little cohesiveness is usually required when coordination is the natural outgrowth of the needs of specific agencies or units. Here, a relationship is established so that required agency functions can be accomplished. For instance, data are requested from an external agency because they are needed for reporting or justification purposes. The effort is voluntary, and there are no sanctions or penalties for non-coordination. The relationship is based on the sole realization that the provision of adequate service, or the accomplishment of a specific function, requires the support of some external agent. Esterline[6] has referred to this type of coordination as voluntary coordination or coordination by

mutual adjustment. This kind of coordination usually involves a wide variety of organizations voluntarily deciding to exchange commodities or service.

Hierarchical coordination[7] is more restrictive in scope and organizational freedom. Here, a hierarchical relationship exists between agencies which are coerced into coordinating. The state agency may require local agencies to submit certain types of information on a continual basis, or local agencies may have to request permission to perform certain activities. Typically, there is a central authority, relationships are predefined, and procedures are established and formalized.

Horizontal coordination, on the other hand, is a composite of selected characteristics from hierarchical and voluntary coordination. Here, although coordination is not hierarchical, it is rigidly defined through existing legislation and operational policies which attempt to relate specific agency functions. Horizontal coordination usually takes the form of various interagency linkage devices such as coordinating councils, fund transfer mechanisms, policy coordination requirements, or external review procedures. The state planning council for vocational education is one such example. The council is required by law and is comprised of representatives from other agencies.

Although many other differentiations can be made, two critical features tend to surface as dimensions of coordination in public agencies: (a) whether the relationship is voluntary or mandated; and (b) whether participating agencies complement each other in accomplishing a broadly defined goal. These features are of critical importance in understanding coordinative behavior in agencies concerned with vocational education.

Coordination in Vocational Education

There are numerous groups, agencies, and institutions that are directly or indirectly involved with the delivery of vocational education services. As a consequence, it is difficult, if not impossible, to fully describe the dimensions for coordination in vocational education. Nevertheless, an attempt to understand these dimensions is a prerequisite for identifying conditions which affect coordination between subunits of the total vocational education system. At this point it may be most convenient to enumerate a partial list of agencies involved in the network of vocational education coordination. But coordinative relationships are so different that such a list will hardly unravel the intricacy of these relationships.

If a hierarchical perspective of vocational education is taken, then coordination revolves around the relationship between the state division of vocational education (SDVE) and the various public local education agencies (LEAs) concerned with delivering vocational education services. The state division is a central authority, relationships with local agencies are defined within state and federal legislation, and formalized procedures exist for the interaction between these agencies. Each part of the total system provides support for the accomplishment of a common but broadly defined goal: the training of individuals for work roles. Here, the primary agencies in the coordination network are LEAs and SDVEs.

Within this system, there are two types of coordination: the intra-agency coordination which exists between different units at both the state and local levels, and the hierarchical inter-agency coordination defining the relationship which exists between the state and local levels. Both these types of coordination complement each other for an effective coordination network. Functions such as program services, evaluation, planning, and budgeting are candidates for intra-agency as well as inter-agency coordination. At each level, evaluation information is used for planning, budgeting, and improving programs; in addition, this information is transmitted between agencies for various purposes. But this system is an oversimplified description of entities for coordination in vocational education; other entities are involved in either horizontal or voluntary coordinative relationships.

At both local and state levels, many external agencies for organizations play critical support roles in maintaining the effectiveness of the vocational education process. At the local level, advisory and craft committees provide valuable input for critical decisions. The school board and various local administrative councils provide policy guidelines. CETA prime sponsors, the local employment security office, the local chamber of commerce, local unions, and individual businesses and industries at the local level all play essential roles in vocational education. They all have their place in the network of vocational education coordination.

At the state level, there is the State Board for Vocational Education, the State Legislature, the State Advisory Council for Vocational Education, and the State Plan Group. In addition, there are other supportive agencies or groups such as the State Occupational Information Coordinating Council, and the State Employment Services Agency, among others; not to mention other groups such as CETA, boards of apprenticeship training, and professional licensure boards. These agencies also have their place in the network of vocational education coordination.

The coordination picture becomes even more complicated when one thinks of the essential linkages between secondary vocational education provided by high schools and secondary vocational centers, and postsecondary vocational education provided by area vocational-technical schools (AVTS), private technical schools, and community colleges. The quality of such relationships cannot be ignored in an articulated framework for vocational education delivery.

The entities for coordination in vocational education may seem somewhat overwhelming but coordination cannot be understood, analyzed, or improved by examining a limited subset of organizational relationships. For instance, the program approval process is a formalized process through which LEAs get state (SDVE) approval to initiate new programs, but those invovled in the process go well beyond the state and local agencies. The craft committee input is essential since it identifies relevant program content, and local school board approval is necessary if the program is to be implemented. Also, the local chamber of commerce may provide information about program need which is not available from the state (SDVE). Even the concern for duplication may create other kinds of relationships since it would require examination of the availability of similar programs in the geographic area. The scenario of peripheral relationships can continue indefinitely. The role each group plays in the system may be quite different, but when roles are mutually supportive, or when the activity of one group can affect the performance of the other, the activities of all performers in the system must be known, and all relationships become important.

The concern in this report centers primarily on coordination between state and local agencies in planning vocational education. This coordination takes place within a very broad context of organizational relationships which cannot be overlooked. This is so not only because their roles are supportive or can have potential impact on one another, but also because of the political climate which can have substantial effects on SDVE/LEA coordination.

To provide some semblance of order to the complex array of organizations, four different levels of coordination are identified. These levels are enumerated below:

- *intra-agency coordination* — the interrelationship between units within vocational education organizations. Example: the relationship between units such as planning, budgeting, and program services. This relationship is of critical importance since inadequate internal coordination can be a major barrier to coordination with external agencies.
- *interagency coordination (hierarchical)* — the critical core of the coordination network represented by relationship between the SDVEs and LEAs

- *interagency coordination (supportive or supplemental)* — refers to the relationship between major vocational education agencies and peripheral vocational education bodies such as advisory councils, state plan groups, state occupational information coordinating councils (SOICCs), etc. These are groups surrounding the nucleus of vocational education delivery represented by the SDVE and LEAs.
- *interagency coordination (voluntary)* — these relationships are voluntarily established by different agencies to accomplish institutional goals. Examples would be the relationship between the SDVE and the state planning agency, or the relationship between an LEA and industries in the immediate area to promote placement for graduates. These relationships fill the gaps for additional services not provided within the system.

Given this context, it is not difficult to understand why there are persistent complaints about the inadequacy of coordination in vocational education. Among the many possible reasons may be the number of entities in the system, or the unrealistic expectations about what can be accomplished through coordination. Whatever the reason, there are numerous factors and conditions which support or hinder interorganizational relations in vocational education. Some of these factors may be beyond the control of vocational education institutions, but if the factors are understood, then the status of coordination can be assessed and attempts to improve relationships can be initiated.

Basic Necessities for Interorganizational Relations

There are at least nine necessities for establishing satisfactory interorganizational relations. These necessities represent some of the basic conditions which seem to underlie coordinative relationships. If these conditions exist, then the probability of successful coordination is increased. The nonexistence of these conditions, however, can raise serious questions about the quality of the coordinative relationship. Each condition (or basic necessity) will be explained separately under its respective subheading.

A Basis for Exchange

One of the fundamental conditions for establishing interorganizational relations is a basis for exchange. Exchange is a basic characteristic of coordination. Coordination requires that some sort of transaction take place between coordinating agencies. This transaction is usually expressed in terms of the resources each participant brings to the coordinative relationship.[8] It is expected that each participant have something to contribute. The items or commodities transacted, or the items contributed to the relationship, comprise the basis for exchange. There are a variety of exchangeable items. These include money, information, equipment, specialized personnel, or clients. As long as there is something worth exchanging, there is the possibility for coordination. The coordination between vocational education and CETA at the local level, for example, is based on the exchange of financial resources by CETA to vocational education for the use by CETA of established vocational education facilities. Each agency has something of interest to the other. This is usually an initial step toward the establishment of cooperative ties. Needless to say, this condition alone does not guarantee a coordinative relationship.

Mutual Benefit

Mutual benefit is closely related to the preceding discussion on the basis for exchange. If there is something to exchange, the concern then becomes whether there are benefits to be realized from the exchange.

The exchange perspective of coordination postulates that relations are formed between two or more organizations when each of them perceives mutual benefits or gains from interacting.[9,10] The interaction is based on self-interest. Administrators will sometimes enter a relationship only when such action enables the agency in their charge to attain some of its subgoals. Hence the local director will have ties with local employers to facilitate placement of graduates. Conversely, local employers will establish ties with LEAs to facilitate the availability of trained workers. In effect, the decision becomes a cost-benefit analysis—"what can my agency gain from the relationship, and what does the agency have to give up or contribute?"

The consideration of mutual benefits is especially important since organizations place a high value on their autonomy.[11] As Esteriine[12] observes, autonomy makes it more convenient for an agency to maintain contact with its environment—funding sources, clients, interest groups. As a result, the attempt to attain benefits through any external relationship is an important decision for the agency, since some autonomy must be sacrificed in order to realize those benefits. Any form of interdependency in the form of coordinative relationships encroaches significantly on organizational autonomy because of the constraints posed through obligations, commitments, and contracts. For this reason some agencies may choose to forego substantial benefits. An example in vocational education is the choice of some LEAs to forego the benefits of federal funding due to the restrictions imposed on expending the funds. Although mutual benefits are important, agencies may choose to forego a benefit to retain their autonomy. Again, the presence of this factor does not guarantee a coordinative relationship.

Awareness

Esterline[13] referred to awareness as a "prerequisite factor" for the exchange of resources. Awareness refers to the degree to which agencies, or units within these agencies, are familiar with the services, goals, or selected characteristics of other agencies or units. More specifically, awareness is the extent to which each agency is knowledgeable of the potential of other organizations to support its activities.[14] Knowledge about other agencies or units enables each organization in the network to make an assessment of the potential for coordination and develop realistic expectations about what can be accomplished through the interaction. Candidate items for which agencies (or units) must be mutually aware are listed below:

- *output* — the total range of items, services, or products produced by external agencies or units, and the selected subset of these items which may contribute to one's own agency's functions
- *needs* — the input requirements or subgoals of other agencies or units to which one's own agency can make a contribution
- *structure* — the administrative lines and legal framework defining external agencies' operations and authority
- *capacity* — the ability of selected agencies (units)—through staff qualifications, resource availability, client relationships, or constituent support—to make some contribution to one's own agency's subgoals
- *domain* — the territory, defined geographically, through client characteristics, or through services provided, for which other agencies similar to one's own are responsible

Awareness also refers to "the degree of personal acquaintance between key staff" in different agencies or units.[15] Such acquaintances make external agencies more accessible, and the ensuing relationships tend to be longer-lasting and more meaningful. It facilitates what Guetzkow[16] calls organizational interpenetration, or boundary permeability.

Mutual Respect, Confidence, and Trust

Respect, confidence, and trust are interdependent terms; one cannot be realized without the other. Total awareness of the characteristics of other agencies (units) is the initial step in gaining mutual respect, confidence, and trust. Before a coordinative posture is developed, enough must be known about the external agency to lay an adequate foundation for mutual confidence. With such knowledge, there may be fewer unanticipated shortfalls, and the problems encountered are not as jolting or disruptive. Jolting or disruptive occurrences are fewer because expectations are more realistic. But this is only the groundwork.

The respect, confidence, and trust nurtured in the beginning of the relationship must be sustained. This sustenance is based on the quality of interaction, and the degree to which realistic expectations are fulfilled. There are many factors which can undermine mutual respect, confidence, and trust. A few of these factors are:

- a lack of timeliness in meeting mutual deadlines
- poor quality output, inaccurate information, incomplete reports, unrealistic advice, and biased viewpoints
- friction over territory, or lack of domain consensus
- competition over common resource bases or clientele

Lack of trust results in an environment of suspicion, which is extremely unhealthy for fruitful coordinative relationships.

Access

The accessibility of agencies to each other is listed by Leving and White[17] as one of three important factors underlying interdependence. Synonomous terms such as organizational penetration and boundary permeability[18] are also used to refer to the concept of access. All of these terms complement each other to convey the meaning and importance of access to interorganizational relations. Although the term penetration may be an overstatement, agencies must be "penetrated" by other agencies to establish or maintain a relationship. Penetration in this context can be defined as the means whereby external agents reach the decision-making network within an agency to access some of its resources. The more accessible an agency, the easier it is to penetrate. There are two major types of accessibility—physical and organizational.

Physical accessibility refers to the physical convenience of contacting the appropriate person within an agency. Some of the factors affecting physical accessibility include: geographic distance between agencies and the availability of a means of direct communication such as telephones or newsletters.

Organizational accessibility refers to inherent characteristics of the organizations which tend to promote contact with the appropriate persons within the organization. Some of the factors impeding organizational accessibility are: organizational distance imposed by a tradition of working independently; an organizational structure without appropriate assignment of "boundary" personnel for handling relationships, e.g., field services consultant; absence of decision-making authority for persons in key coordinative roles; and policies or administrative guidelines which make it difficult to establish contact or maintain a relationship.

Some agencies willingly make themselves inaccessible in an attempt to preserve organizational autonomy. In most such cases, boundary personnel are used as buffers which help the institution to insulate itself from the environment.[19,20] This insulation is used to acquire the benefits of a coordinative posture, while still preserving organizational independence. Again, the need for autonomy results in a distinct pattern of coordinative behavior—a behavior which affects coordination through the denial of access.

Communication

Communication is the transmittal of information between agencies in a coordination network. It is important in maintaining coordinative relationships, since it keeps appropriate parties informed and aware of issues of mutual concern. Communication can be informal or formal; it can be occasional or regular; and it can be conducted face-to-face through meetings, seminars or personal visits, or via telephone conversations, memos, or reporting forms. There are two types of communication: internal and external. Internal communications enhance intraorganizational coordination, while external communication caters to the maintenance of external relationships.

The number of external relationships affects the nature of internal communication. Evan[21] noted that the number of agencies with which an agency interacts has significant consequences on its internal structure. One such consequence is the impact on internal communication channels. For an organization to maintain external relationships, internal communication must be increased to accommodate the internal flow of information necessary to maintain an adequate linkage.[22] Since communication is increased with the intensity and number of cooperative ties, the need for internal adjustment in communication channels will be greatest when there are strong cooperative efforts, or when a large number of organizations is engaged in some relationship.

Communication is important, but even more important is the organizational flexibility to make internal adjustments which accommodate increasing communication demands. A typical organizational adjustment to promote effective communication is the decentralization of decision-making authority. This action avoids the long lines of communication for decision making which are usually very time-consuming, and which have the tendency to distort information before decisions can be made. When internal communication channels are inadequate the benefits of coordination are harder to accomplish; as a result, cooperative ties become less productive and eventually die.

Similarity of Attributes—Goals, Values

Compatibility or congruence are elemental concepts which are central to understanding coordinative behavior. These concepts were cultivated in comparative approaches to interorganizational analysis, where organizations are compared on certain attributes to assess the feasibility of interaction.[23] Generally, similarity on a few critical attributes is considered a necessity for interorganizational relations. Miller[24] found that differing philosophies are a deterrent to coordination, and Johns and Demarche[25] cited congruency of objectives as a factor affecting interaction. Differing attributes such as philosophies and ideologies, goals and objectives, or even differences in organizational structure and agency expectations, can negatively affect coordination. Similarity in these attributes increases the chances for establishing mutual efforts.

Dissimilarity can be detrimental for many reasons. As differences between organizations increase the need for compromise also increases, resulting in greater emphasis on conflict-laden activities such as negotiation and accommodation. In addition, differences can result in agencies having varying levels of commitment to selected interorganizational goals. Similarity on these dimensions is the first step to unity in purpose and is a precursor to cooperation; but this is not always the case.

Evan[26] predicts that the greater the similarity of goals and functions between two organizations, the greater the amount of competition between them. This is understandable since organizations with similar goals may have the same clients and resource base. Under such circumstances some competition can be expected. Levine and White[27] note the tendency for competition is greatest when organizations with similar functions operate below their capacity. In an environment where there are enough clients and resources to meet the need of both organizations, competition is less keen and cooperation is possible. When resource bases are different, the possibility of competition may also be lessened.

Sometimes goals are not similar, but complementary. Under these circumstances competition is avoided, and the situation is very much more conducive to cooperation between the respective organizations.

Opportunity

Stevens[28] in discussing coordination between vocational education and CETA, identified two distinct aspects of cooperative ties: "the *opportunity* to cooperate, and the *incentive* to do so." The opportunity is the existing condition, or set of circumstances, which causes one agency to initiate contact with the other. Though all the basic necessities for coordination may exist, if the opportunity to cooperate does not occur, coordinative relationships will not be established.

The opportunity to cooperate arises in a variety of ways: new demands may be made on an organization; resources can become scarce; or personnel may be transferred from one agency to the other. However, the most frequent conditions which create such an opportunity in public agencies is the formulation and implementation of legislation and policy guidelines. Both the Education Amendments of 1976 and the CETA Amendments of 1978 provide the opportunity for vocational education and CETA to coordinate. Although the opportunity is there, if other basic coordination factors (or necessities) are missing, impediments to coordination are encountered.

Incentive

Incentive or inducement to establish coordinative relationships is the basic necessity which differentiates between symbolic and productive coordination activities. Symbolic coordination activities result from weak inducements to cooperate. One such inducement is that labeled by Cohen[29] as "bureaucratic." The implementing agent for bureaucratic inducement is realized in the form of legislation or policy guidelines. Here the requirement for coordination is imposed upon the agency, and the incentive to coordinate is artificial and weak. Only administrative evidence is required to show coordination, and there is no compelling reason for agencies to realize the true benefits of cooperation. This led Stevens[30] to conclude that the incentive for genuine cooperation is missing from CETA and vocational education legislation.

A more fruitful way of thinking about incentive is in terms of rewards. Here, the anticipated reward from cooperation serves as an inducement to establish cooperative ties. In genuine and productive coordination efforts, the anticipated benefits to be derived from the relationship (or the items exchanged) is sufficiently rewarding to establish cooperative ties.

There are basic factors which seem to make an environment more conducive to cooperative ties. These, referred to as the basic necessities for coordination, are summarized as follows:

- items to exchange, or some commodity or service that other agencies may need
- the potential for all participating agencies to benefit from the relationship
- knowledge of other organizations which have the potential of impacting on an agency's activities
- mutual respect, confidence, and trust
- a means of reaching the decision-making network within an organization
- convenient and sufficient communication
- similar or complementary goals, values, or ideologies
- the opportunity to establish cooperative ties
- the incentive to enter a coordinative relationship

The existence of these basic conditions does not ensure effective coordination. There are secondary factors which tend to affect the quality of relationships once they are initiated.

Secondary Factors Affecting Coordinative Relationships

If basic necessities for coordination are met, the environment becomes conducive for two or more organizations to cooperate. This, however, does not eliminate the possibility that circumstances will arise which can affect the quality of coordination between them. These circumstances are referred to as "secondary factors" since they address the more subtle aspects of coordinative relationships. These factors grow out of the natural behavioral tendency of organizations or persons within them, or they are created by environmental forces over which the cooperating organizations have no control. They shed additional light on the condition which can enhance or impede cooperative ties. Eight secondary factors affecting coordinative relationships are discussed next.

Autonomy

As previously mentioned, organizations prefer to be autonomous. As a result, there is always a tension in the direction of becoming an independent unit within the system. Since coordination does not allow this independence, the tension is a constant threat to cooperation, because whenever an organization can afford to, cooperative ties will be broken. The concern becomes one of sustaining interest in cooperation. The easiest and least productive way to sustain interest is to have such cooperation required by law. It is easy because cooperation can be sustained effortlessly. It is least productive, since unwilling participants to the relationship will show signs of cooperation without actually cooperating, or their cooperative efforts will somehow take considerably more effort than it is worth. This is one reason for the commonly held belief that "true cooperation cannot be mandated."

The alternative to this is to ensure that mutual benefits result from the relationship. In this way organizations having something to give will have something to receive. It should be noted, however, that the items received, or the number of suppliers of that item, will make a great difference in the ability to sustain the relationship.

Nature of Input or Benefit

The strength of a relationship depends to a large extent on the value or significance attached to the item received. If the item received can be easily substituted, or if it is considered not very essential to one's subgoals, then the value attached to the item will be minimal, and the degree of dependence for the organization receiving that item will be low. Jacobs[31] identified two components of dependence: the essentiality of an item, and the availability of the items from other sources (substitutability). When dependence is low, cooperation ties are difficult to maintain. This leads to imbalance in relationships which can reduce the desire for coordination.

The strongest ties tend to develop when the items transacted by cooperating agencies complement the activities of each agency. In such cases, their mutual efforts are mutually beneficial. The state demographer's office can provide educational planners with information on population characteristics; in return, the educational planner can provide the demographer with information on enrollment by institutional type and age group. They will mutually contribute to their information needs. The critical element—mutual benefit—is again a fundamental concern.

Power and Domination

When cooperating agencies have similar or complementary functions, and one agency is more powerful than the other, a threat to effective coordination is created. The basis of the threat is the potential for the dominant agency to control the internal activities of the subordinate organization. The threat is really a fear of organization penetration which may eventually lead to acquiescence. Excessive penetration or acquiescence may lead to a redefinition of the subordinate agency's goals.

The sources of power can come from many factors. Among them are: maturity, success, financial and constituent support, and resource abundance. Whatever the sources of power, excessive exertion of authority by one agency can threaten the autonomy of another agency.

Although power can be the natural outcome of the maturity of the dominant agency, it can also result from the nature of the cooperative relationship. If the relationship is asymmetrical; that is, if one agency tends to give more than it receives from another agency, then there is an imbalance in the relationship, and the agency benefitting most can become subordinate. Also, if one agency has total control of critical resources for another agency's operation, then the other agency becomes a subordinate.

Organizations can be controlled through exchange relationships, and such control can redefine the terms of coordination. The concept of power, and the potential for power to result in dominance are important factors in understanding coordinative behavior.

Turfism

Turfism is the protective behavior of one organization because of the perceived threat of encroachment on its territory by outside agencies. Although all the necessities for coordination may be present, it may still be difficult to establish coordination because of this protective behavior.

There are at least four major reasons for turf protection: (1) the need for jurisdictional autonomy; (2) the fear that outside intervention may change the familiarity, comfort, and confidence associated with working within one's own structures; (3) the fear of the disclosure of an agency's problems; and (4) the fear of losing identity and prestige.

Denton[32] points out that successful interagency coordination depends on mutual adherence to the compromising position that "turf" is the common ground of all. Under the best of circumstances such agreements may be difficult to procure. But there must be mutual agreement on common territory, and agreement on the territorial limits of each agency. There must be interagency consensus on separate and common domains of influence. Under these conditions, the threat underlying "turfism" will be minimized, and an unwarranted impediment to coordination could be eliminated.

Primacy of Functions

Organizations may work toward similar goals, but may assign different priorities to subgoals or specific organizational functions. As a result, any commonality of purpose which appears on the surface may not really exist since the organizations may be quite different in their emphases. The difference in emphases, or difference in ranking of functions, is referred to as differences in the primacy of functions. One organization may have a high priority on one function, while the other organization may assign the same function a low priority. An organization's primacy of function is a major element in determining the organization's need to coordinate, or its need for exchanging elements.[33,34]

The primacy of function also determines the significance attached to the relationship. If the relationship contributes to the accomplishment of a subgoal which has low priority in the organization, then, for that organization, the relationship may also have a low priority. It is best to establish cooperative ties with organizations whose benefit from the relationship allows them to accomplish one of their primary functions.

Changing Environmental Conditions

Changing environmental conditions tend to have at least three disruptive effects on coordination: uncertainties about the effectiveness or predictability of coordination are created; there is a periodic need to make adjustments in coordination procedures to maintain productive relationships; and frustrations result from continual changes in procedures. Changing environmental conditions include: changes in policy or procedural guidelines; changes in key persons within agencies; and changes in the quantity of resources available.

In addition to change, the complexity or heterogeneity of the environment for coordination may make the establishment of cooperative ties difficult. The primary reason for this difficulty is the additional burden for organizations to become sufficiently aware of the characteristics of other organizations from whom they can potentially benefit. In addition, it may take considerably more effort to deal with multiple organizations with varying structures, goals, and organizational procedures.

Role Descriptions

The performance requirements of persons in key coordinative roles must be fully understood by: (1) the person in that role, (2) the individuals with whom that person deals, and (3) individuals functioning in complementary roles. This allows for a clear channel of communication, and avoids role duplication and working at cross purposes.

Personality Conflicts

Individuals are different. When such differences breed resentment, and when the individuals are key links (or potential links) in a coordinative relationship, the quality of coordination is affected. This is especially detrimental when such individuals function at the boundaries of their respective organization or unit.

There are many other factors which have the potential for affecting coordinative relationships. When all these factors are considered, it becomes clearly evident that coordination is not a casual affair. It requires a great deal of effort to establish and maintain productive cooperative ties.

Summary

A facilitator to coordination is a procedure, activity, or policy (or a combination thereof) which has the potential for promoting, maintaining, or strengthening, productive cooperative ties between agencies. Facilitators to coordination are usually the procedures, activities, or policies which ensure cognizance or fulfillment of the basic necessities for interorganizational relations; or the procedures, activities, or policies which serve as protective shields to the disruptive effects resulting from the performance of secondary factors which affect coordinative relationships.

Barriers are opposite to facilitators since they impede the development or maintenance of cooperative ties between agencies. The distribution of brochures across agencies to explain each agency's functions or services can be considered a facilitator to coordination, since it promotes interorganizational awareness; but lack of funds which restricts the exchange of such brochures between state agencies would be considered a barrier. The tendency to resist encroachment by other agencies can be considered a barrier to coordination, while mutually developed policies to clearly define each agency's territory is a facilitator because it relieves the threat and fear of encroachment.

Many facilitators to coordination were identified in the literature. These are listed in Table 1, together with the author and the means of facilitation associated with each. Table 2 lists examples of facilitators suggested by participants in the dialogue sessions in relation to the facilitators identified in the literature.

TABLE 1

FACILITATORS IDENTIFIED IN A REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE ON INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Facilitator	*Type of Facilitation*
overlapping membership[10,16]	• promotes awareness • provides a direct communication link—access • fosters the accommodation of differences in ideologies, etc.
personnel transfers[16]	• promotes better understanding of each other's operation—awareness • fosters accommodation of differences
connector committees[36]	• fosters accommodation of differences • provides direct communication linkages • serves as a buffer for interagency conflict
joint use of facilities[32]	• provides a clear realization of mutual benefits • accommodates differences in programming and schedules • provides a common bond for joint action
centralized purchasing[32]	• provides a clear realization of mutual benefit • promotes interagency awareness
permanent staff liaison[32]	• provides direct communication linkages • promotes access
joint discussion and study groups for policies[32]	• accommodates differences • promotes interorganizational awareness • provides a forum for joint action • provides a basis for mutual commitment • provides a means of interagency communication
joint maintenance of public information programs[32]	• promotes awareness

continued

TABLE 1 (Continued)

FACILITATORS IDENTIFIED IN A REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE ON INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Facilitator	*Type of Facilitation*
delineation of constraints and identification of supportive resources for coordination[32]	• identifies coordination barriers which need to be eliminated
identification, study, and publicity of successful interagency experiences in coordination[32]	• develops a support base to maintain a coordinative relationship
establishing nonthreatening settings for interagency personnel to get to know one another[32]	• fosters free and uninhibited communication between agencies
making all actors aware of the negative effects of disfunctionalities and the advantages of coordination[32]	• creates awareness of the scope and potential for coordination
encouraging mutual sensitivity	• enables each agency to understand the constraints and philosophies of the other, thereby breaking down barriers resulting from lack of knowledge
assist participants in broadening their viewpoints	• educates participants about the scope for coordination—awareness
intergovernmental study committees	• provides an opportunity for mutual problem solving • provides an opportunity to understand the goals and limitations of others • provides a common information base for supporting activities
training about the role and functions of different persons and units in the system[36]	• promotes awareness • fosters communication
external agency participation in the development of plans[36]	• promotes awareness • promotes mutual sensitivity
joint planning processes[36]	• promotes the interfacing of activities
initiation of clearinghouse review functions[36]	• promotes awareness

continued

TABLE 1 (Continued)

FACILITATORS IDENTIFIED IN A REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE ON INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Facilitator	*Type of Facilitation*
share staff to conduct planning activities[36]	• promotes awareness
intergovernmental planning team[36]	• promotes interagency awareness • synchronizes timelines
develop and distribute procedures for resolving interagency policy conflicts	• facilitates interagency problem solving
joint development of data bases, information systems, definitions, and publication format	• provides a basis for communication • provides a common base for planning
use of common advisory structures or committees	• enables cross-communication • provides a common base of support • provides a forum for resolving differences
procedure for giving pertinent agencies an opportunity to have input in policy formation	• avoids the potential of noncoordination because of inadequate policies • provides an incentive for coordination
develop specific ways of establishing both formal and informal communication networks such as: newsletters, meeting notices, activity schedules, etc.	• provides avenues to keep pertinent individuals aware and informed • prevents disruptions to smooth coordination because of a lack of critical information

TABLE 2

FACILITATORS TO COORDINATED PLANNING

Facilitator Suggested in Background Literature	*Examples Mentioned and Suggested by Study Respondents*
overlapping membership	• interlocking board members between CETA prime sponsor advisory committee and vocational education advisory committee
personnel transfers	• transfer across units within the SDVE, e.g., program supervisor from the program services unit transferred to approve local program applications within the planning unit of the SDVE
connector committees	• local area council of secondary and postsecondary institutions • use of board of cooperative services to promote shared use of administrative/support staff
joint use of facilities	• shared use of facilities between CETA and vocational education, and between secondary and postsecondary vocational education, or between local districts
centralized purchasing	• no examples identified
establishing non-threatening setting for interaction	• statewide conferences for vocational educators • regionally-based meetings of vocational educators for information exchange
making actors aware of negative effects *and* advantages	• no examples identified
encouragement of mutual sensitivity	• development of positive interpersonal relationships
assist actors in broadening views	• development of positive interpersonal relationships
interagency study committees	• ad hoc task forces involving state and local staff to deal with various planning problems

continued

TABLE 2 (Continued)

FACILITATORS TO COORDINATED PLANNING

Facilitator Suggested in Background Literature	*Examples Mentioned and Suggested by Study Respondents*
training about roles and functions	• SOICC sponsors data users' conferences • training sessions in planning procedure/policy for new vocational administrators • procedure for orienting and training local advisory council members • training for districts in use of state policy and procedure manual
external agency participant in development of plans	• state division provides technical assistance for local district planning
joint planning processes	• process for involving state and local staff in developing evaluationprocedures, criteria, instruments • vocational education and state commerce department planning for industrial development
clearinghouse review function	• potential role of state division • local area council of secondary and postsecondary institutions
sharing of staff for planning	• aid provided by the SDVE to LEAs for the development of their local vocational education plans
development of conflict resolution practices	• interagency cooperative agreement • appeal process for justification of program initiation by locally-gathered information
intergovernmental planning team	• potential role of SOICC, State Plan Council
joint management information system development	• efforts toward reduction in duplication of paperwork among manpower and training agencies • goal of SOICC oeprations
common advisory boards	• board of governance serving both secondary and post-secondary institution in local area
procedure for input in policy formation	• legislative mandate that state agencies must set aside a period of time for acquiring field input • procedure for involving district staff with state in determining goals/objectives of vocational education • recommendation that local districts have more input to federal legislation

continued

TABLE 2 (Continued)

FACILITATORS TO COORDINATED PLANNING

local representation on state board/committee	• local representation on state advisory council, state board governing vocational education
establishing communication networks	• calendar of planning activities in vocational education disseminated by state division
permanent staff liaison	• state education agency liaison person to legislature • state vocational division liaison person to other education divisions • system of regional service to districts by state program supervision and planning staff • designation of state staff person as coordinator of various plans required by federal government
joint discussion/study groups	• potential role of State Plan Council
joint maintenance of public information programs	• state division and area schools sponsor a program of recognizing outstanding students through extensive use of media
delineation of constraints and supportive resources	• no examples identified
dissemination of successful coordination experiences	• no examples identified

APPENDIX A

FIELDSITE COORDINATORS AND CONSULTANTS

Fieldsite Coordinators

Wallace Clark & John Lacey	Colorado
John Sojat	Florida
Wiley Simpson	Georgia
Carol Rhea	Kansas
Paula Keller	Oklahoma
Harold Sullivan	West Virginia
Frederick Hiestand	Wisconsin
Dan Bristow	Texas

Consultants Assisting in Dialogue Sessions

Ernest Heiny	Florida
Gary Ward	Kansas
Dale Hughey	Oklahoma
Ray Kesler	West Virginia
Lawrence Hoyt	Wisconsin

Technical Panel Participants

James Hale	Florida
Fred Krusemark	Texas
Mary Ellis	Washington,DC
Gilbert Cardenas	Washington,DC

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANTS IN THE DIALOGUE SESSIONS

State Staff—Vocational Education	*Total*
State Directors/Assistant Directors/Section Directors	25
Program Area Supervisors/Consultants	38
Planning/Budgeting/MIS staff	29
Evaluation staff	6
Disadvantaged/Handicapped Specialists	7
Equity Coordinators/RCU/Affirmative Action	11
Miscellaneous SDVE staff	18
State Staff-Related Departments—State Agencies	
Department of Public Instruction (non-vocational)	6
Board of Regents/Postsecondary Administrators	6
Department of Labor/Employment Security staff	4
Department of Economic Development staff	2
State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee staff	8
Miscellaneous	7
Local Staff	
Local Vocational Education Directors/Assistants	66
AVTS Directors	23
Community College Directors/Deans/Presidents	45
School Superintendents/Assistants	17
Principals/Assistant Principals	6
Guidance Counselors	6
CETA/Skill Center Administrators	5
Advisory Council/Involved Citizens	
State Advisory Council for Vocational Education members	16
Local Advisory Councils for Vocational Education members	13
School Board members	3
Miscellaneous business and industry representatives	1
State Plan group members	4
Other Groups	
Teacher Educators	8

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